Breaking barriers: how businesses can embrace cloud adoption

Right now, cloud adoption is an important business imperative for many organisations. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, businesses are now painfully aware of the need for solutions that provide flexibility, agility, and new opportunities to innovate. In particular, with remote and hybrid working models expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future, on-premises based access to data is fast becoming an issue for organisations.

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Recent _insights_ from IDG only serve to reinforce this trend, suggesting that 81% of organisations already use cloud computing, or have applications in the cloud, while 55% now use more than one public cloud to bolster their operations.

That said, many other businesses still find themselves hindered and held back from adopting these technologies, or else implementing cloud technologies more systemically within their organisation. Despite the pressing need for such solutions, concerns over value, security, control and trust still loom large.

With this in mind, what should organisations consider when if they are still having doubts over the cloud?

Legacy software poses problems

First and foremost, businesses may be held back by their reliance on legacy software, or niche products that fulfil specific business needs, which have not been transitioned over to the cloud.

Although some organisations might believe that a simple 'lift and shift' rehosting of pre-existing applications might suffice within the cloud, this is not necessarily the best approach. In many cases, this sort of migration may lead to incompatibility and poor cost-optimisation. To get the most out of the cloud, workloads must also be designed to run in the cloud – this means that solutions must be secure, resilient and scalable. Simply running monolithic platforms in the cloud environment without any adjustment may make for a sub-optimal deployment.

As such, businesses must look at the bigger picture. Naturally, this involves re-assessing how legacy systems fit into your organisation's future plans – some products may still fit the bill, but others will be better off replaced, or displaced altogether, in favour of more innovative solutions.

Taking into consideration the financial implications of migrating these systems would be a good start. Businesses must consider the monetary impact of any temporary downtime, as well as the resources needed to complete the process. Ultimately, any cloud implementation plans must be considered into an organisation's larger digital transformation strategy to truly unlock the full benefits.

The cloud is more, not less, secure

Another important factor that may be preventing businesses from migrating to the cloud are security woes. To this end, an overwhelming majority of organisations (93%) _surveyed_ by Coalfire said that they were

moderately to extremely concerned by security issues, which have posed obstacles to cloud adoption.

At least in part, this is understandable – the assumption being that because a server is local and housed on-site, it is more secure than the cloud. That said, it is precisely this 'physicality' that creates a false sense of security for businesses. More often than not, compromised data and security breaches do not occur as a result of somebody physically breaking into a data centre. Rather, cyberattacks tend to be the modus operandi of hackers.

A more realistic concern is the fact that organisations are solely responsible for securing their data in the cloud environment. According to the Coalfire survey mentioned earlier, businesses struggle with this reality, as 64% organisations mentioned data loss and leakage as a prime concern, with data privacy and confidentiality coming in close at 62%. Businesses also cited insecure interfaces and APIs, misconfiguration of cloud platforms, unauthorised access, compliance and a lack of visibility when weighing up their cloud strategy.

Here, organisations must get to the root of the problem. The fact is, that these problems all arise from more general security concerns, so business leaders must evaluate how well their current security measures are serving their business requirements. If these provisions are not quite making the cut, it may be time for a security overhaul. Likewise, businesses must consider how well these measures will protect their organisation as they grow, change, and implement new technologies.

One solution would be to invest in cloud platforms which automate compliance, have APIs that can audit and send alerts about security events, and encrypt data-at-rest. Doing so should put some of these worries to bed.

Too high a cost?

Finally, perhaps the biggest barrier to systemic cloud adoption is the perceived cost of investing in the first place. While cloud technologies have the potential to improve service levels and operations, reduce costs and better support the business in the long-term, it is important to acknowledge that the cloud is not just a cheaper data centre. Put simply, the cloud is a way to do things differently, and should be considered as an ongoing innovation process.

While there may be no doubt that an initial investment can be costly, businesses should note that cloud computing can be a much more efficient means of allocating resource, rather than spending on costly data centre hardware, or managing pre-existing legacy software.

Meanwhile, newer firms will likely find that the transition to the cloud is well worth the investment, allowing them to scale up quickly and effectively. The cost benefits of doing so are marked, as these businesses will not have to spend so heavily on servers, while also profiting from machine learning technology and data analytics to drive their business decisions.

In short, investing in the cloud means more than just a new storage solution. I urge business and technology leaders to debunk their concerns and consider their cloud strategy as a fundamental part of business in the new normal – they will not regret doing so.

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